KENTUCKY DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Grant

The Kentucky Division of Forestry, in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service, is encouraging rural fire departments to apply for Volunteer Fire Assistance grant funds for 2026. The following information describes the 2026 Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Organize, train, and equip fire departments in unprotected rural areas and rural communities for suppression of wildland fires.
- Assist qualifying fire departments in saving lives and protecting property in unprotected or inadequately protected rural communities.
- Prevent or reduce loss of life, protect financial investments, and enhance environmental quality to revitalize rural America.
- Increase the opportunity for rural fire departments to acquire training and current information on wildland fire prevention techniques.

INELIGIBLE PROPOSALS

This cost-share program is for programs, projects, or activities **not currently being funded** and is not intended to be a substitute for **existing** funding levels. The focus of this program is to support **new initiatives** that would not otherwise occur without grant funds.

NOTE: VFA funding is not authorized for:

- A single piece of equipment with a purchase value of $5,000.00 or more.
- Trucks, cars, ATVs, UAVs, or utility-type vehicles.
- Fire equipment modification-i.e. lights, sirens, decals, embroidery, or general maintenance.
- Any capital improvements such as fire stations or pressurized water systems.
- Land acquisitions.
- Medical equipment.
- Jacketed fire hose greater than 1½ inches in diameter.
- Items not used in the suppression or protection from wildland fire.
- Turn-out gear/Bunker gear, “Dual-Certified” equipment with structural inserts, structural boots, structural gloves, structural hard hats, and face shields.
- Cut off saws/rescue saws and or rescue saw blades.
- Foam or any foam components.
- Firing or Back Firing Devices (Drip torches, Fusees, Varaly Pistols, etc.)

ELIGIBILITY

- A rural fire department, which is defined as an organized, not-for-profit, fire protection organization that provides service primarily to a rural area or a rural community with a population of 10,000 or less (latest Census), may qualify.
- A single fire department, which is defined as an organized, not-for-profit, fire protection organization that is currently using the National Integrated Incident Management System (NIMS), may qualify.
- Area fire departments (fire districts, townships, etc.) that are defined as organized, not-for-profit, fire protection organizations may serve an aggregate population of greater than 10,000 if the service area of the fire department includes a rural area or a rural community having a population of 10,000 or less. The VFA funding must be used to benefit the rural population.
- A single county or town with a population over 10,000 that is served by two or more fire districts operating entirely within the bounds of the county or town may qualify if the service area of a given fire department includes a rural area, a rural community, or the population of the fire department's jurisdiction is 10,000 or less. The VFA funding must be used for the rural area.
- A single community with a population greater than 10,000 and having a single fire department with one or more fire stations may qualify. The fire department must have a service area that includes a rural area or community that does not exceed 10,000 in population. The VFA funding must be used only for the benefit of the rural population.
- A single community with a population greater than 10,000 in population may also be eligible provided the VFA funding is used entirely to support the rural community.
- A single community fire department serving a population greater than 10,000 and not providing protection to a rural area or to a rural community is **not** eligible for VFA financial assistance.
- A single community fire department that is defined as an organized, not-for-profit, fire protection organization that is at least 80% volunteer.

MATCHING FUND REQUIREMENTS

This is a cost-share grant. The Federal Government and the Grantee share the total cost of the project. Funds are awarded on a 50/50 matching basis. The Grantee must match the amount awarded by providing at least 50 percent of the total project cost. The Grantee's share of the match must be in either cash or in-kind services. The Grantee's share cannot come from a federal source, and the grant cannot be used as a match for any other federal cost-share project.

Cash purchase matches are direct, out-of-pocket expenditures for eligible project activities that are supported by paid invoices, canceled checks, and signed receipts.

In-kind contributions match such as third-party donations of supplies or equipment, professional services at the professional rate, or time spent by

employees or volunteers on eligible project activities. Volunteer hours may be applied to the project at rates appropriate to the skill level of the volunteer and/or the nature of the work being performed. Assistance provided by federal employees may not be claimed.

Grantees are required to maintain project records in accordance with all applicable federal and state regulations. This includes: (1) records shall comply with generally accepted accounting principles; (2) records will document allowable costs; (3) records will be supported by source documentation, such as canceled checks, paid invoices, and signed contracts; and (4) records will be maintained for three years following payment.

ELIGIBLE VFA PROJECTS

- Purchase of the following equipment and materials:
    - Wildland Personal Protective Equipment clothing (NFPA 1977 certified) and line gear, including hard hats, headlamps, safety glasses, earplugs, Nomex (shroud/shirt/pants and or jumpsuits), leather gloves, boots, line packs, and fire shelters.
    - "Dual-Certified" equipment for wildland fire only. When selecting "Dual-Certified" equipment, the grantee must provide in-depth documentation showcasing exact specifications and must exclude any structural firefighting inserts.
    - Wildland fire hand tools include felling axes, Pulaski's, Council rakes, hoes, and flappers.
    - Wildland fire power tools include forestry chainsaws and leaf blowers.
    - Wildland fire engine/skid unit components including non-collapsible water tanks (up to 300 gals), pumps, reels, forestry hoses/fittings, and nozzles (up to 1 ½").
    - Handheld and mobile radios.
    - Purchase of wildland fire training materials.

FUNDING RANGES

The funding range for grant money requested is $1,000 to $5,000. The total project cost should be at least twice the grant amount requested. Award amounts will be limited to $5,000 per Federal Identification Number.

GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW

All proposals will be graded and ranked by the local Kentucky Division of Forestry Branch offices. The State Forester will allocate funds and award grants based on the recommendations of the Branch offices.

Scoring criteria will be weighted more heavily for applications requesting wildland PPE and based, in part, upon the number of years since the applicant was last awarded a VFA grant.

DEADLINES

Applications must be emailed to KDFGrants.VFA@Ky.gov and must **be received** before 4:30 P.M. EDT on April 30, 2026. **Only scanned PDF documentation** will be accepted, **No other file types or photos will be accepted**. No applications will be accepted after the deadline. Please ensure that your email settings will allow you to receive emails from KDFGrants.VFA@Ky.gov and that your email settings will not deposit them in spam/junk folders. Grantees will be notified via email of funding approval by August 1, 2026. Once all Memoranda of Agreement are returned and finalized within the date guidelines, grants will be assigned an official start date (TBD), and an ending date of June 1, 2027. Grantees **will not** purchase items before an official start date (TBD) has been set.

Grantees may submit paperwork for reimbursement via email to: KDFGrants.VFA@Ky.gov as soon as the grant project is complete. Only scanned PDF documentation will be accepted; no other file types or photos will be accepted. However, all Grantees must have projects completed and all required reimbursement documentation submitted to the Kentucky Division of Forestry by June 30, 2027. Failure to adhere to these instructions, as outlined within the "Deadlines" section could lead to disqualification.

PAYMENT PROCESS

- Grantees must submit proof of expenditure by providing **all invoices** needed to support the Commonwealth of Kentucky "Standard Invoice".
- All costs must be documented correctly before reimbursement is processed.
- Grantees are paid on a reimbursement basis **after** the project is complete. **No partial reimbursements or payments are permitted.**
- **Unapproved grant expenses,** those not in the original approved application or those that do not have written approval from the Kentucky Division of Forestry during the grant process, **will not be paid. Purchases and/or projects must match what was included in the application that was approved.**

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For assistance, contact the Rural Fire Suppression Technical Advisor William H. Duncan at 502-782-3931 or via email at KDFGrants.VFA@Ky.gov.

The grant package will be available on the Kentucky Division of Forestry's website at: https://eec.ky.gov/Natural-Resources/Forestry.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Written narratives must be included with the application form and should not exceed one page. Grant proposals should clearly indicate a need for volunteer fire assistance and must adhere to the format below. Please remember to be as thorough as possible; project proposals are more likely to be funded when they include all the information listed below. Incomplete applications will not score high enough to be funded and cannot be graded competitively. **Remember to include the original application plus one complete copy of the application.**

1. **Narrative (not to exceed one page):**
   - Clearly states the purpose and the objective of the project.
   - States how the project will impact long-range wildfire suppression goals.
   - States how the project will provide safe wildland fire suppression.
   - Detail how the project will be accomplished by addressing the following:
     - Participants (personnel, volunteers, sponsors, etc.).
     - Enhancement of wildfire/urban interface fire suppression capacity or training.
     - Timetable.
     - Administration of project.
     - End product/result.

2. **Detailed budget:**
   - **Include <u>each</u> of the following in each application:**
     - Detailed breakdown of how **grant funds** will be utilized.
     - Detailed estimate which itemizes and clarifies all items requested by the Grantee. (ex. If purchasing "Dual-Certified" equipment Grantee must include manufacturer information detailing specs for that item.)
     - All sources of **cash matches** (donated items, contractor fees, etc.).
     - All sources of **in-kind services** (donated time, etc.).

For an application to be considered, it must meet the following guidelines:

- All applications **must** contain a written narrative.
- All applications received **must** be on the official form **F-16**.
- All applications **must** have a detailed, itemized list breaking down the cost and specifications of all items requested.
- No faxed applications will be accepted.
- No single ticket item of $5,000 or more will be accepted.
- No vehicles (trucks, cars, ATVs, or utility-type vehicles).
- No Drones will be accepted.
- No cut-off saws/rescue saws.
- No structural gear or extraction equipment.
- No "Dual-Certified" items, which include materials strictly for structure fire suppression.
- All applications **must** have a Federal Identification Number, UEI Number, and Kentucky Vendor Number.

Any application received that violates the provisions above **will not be accepted**.

Form F-16
Rev. 01-26

KENTUCKY DIVISION OF FORESTRY
VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE (VFA) GRANT APPLICATION

Name of rural fire department _____

Mailing address_____
(Street or P.O. Box) (City) (Zip Code)

County _____ Business Telephone _____ Fax_____

Contact Person _____ Title _____ Email_____

Chief's Name_____ Email_____

Is your department located in an incorporated town?_____
(Yes or No)

Population of town_____

Area now protected (or proposed)_____
(Square Miles)

Estimated population of protected area_____

Year fire department established_____

UEI Number ***(required)*** _____

Kentucky Vendor Number ***(required)*** _____

Federal Identification Number ***(required)*** _____

List total funds received from taxing authorities (such as city, county, rural fire districts, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

Describe your present firefighting vehicular equipment.

Type	Make/Year/Model	Pumping Capacity (GPM)	Water Carrying Capacity (Gal)

List the items to be purchased (i.e., 4 pairs Nomex pants, 600 ft. 1½-inch hose, 100 training workbooks, etc.).

Name of Item	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Total		

Number of Active Members:_____ Number of Paid Full-Time:____

Number of Paid Part-Time Personnel:_____ Number of Volunteers:_____

Select one that applies to your department:

Government _____ Quasi Government _____ Non-Profit _____

Non-profit designation departments must include an IRS Determination Status Letter with the application, and their non-profit status must be in good standing with the IRS.

Has your department received VFA grant funds or purchased small tools with VFA funds before?

Yes_____ No_____

Is your fire department currently using National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Yes_____ No_____

Grant Funds Requested: 50/50 Matching Funds (<u>round to nearest dollar</u>)

Grant Funds Requested: $_____ (not more than 50 percent of total)
Cash Match: $_____
In-kind Match: $_____
Total Project Amount: $_____

Submit Application Via Email To: KDFGrants.VFA@ky.gov

Application Deadline: April 30, 2026

To the best of my knowledge, the above information is true and correct, and I am authorized by the_____Fire Department to represent their interests.

Signed _____

_____
(Title)

Date _____